



The President's Daily Brief

24 March 1971

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

At yesterday's SALT session the Soviets proposed a separate treaty on measures to reduce the danger of war by accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons. (Page 1)

The Pakistani disputants offer some sharply conflicting public statements on the state of their talks, but some behind-the-scenes progress appears to have been made. (Page 2)

The Argentine junta has begun naming its cabinet. (Page 3)

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SALT

At yesterday's session the Soviets tabled yet another proposal for an early agreement limited to one topic discussed at SALT. This time Semenov pushed for a separate treaty on measures aimed at reducing the danger of an outbreak of war between the US and USSR caused by accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons. Semenov contended that the substantive views of both sides on this matter already "coincide to a great degree," and he termed it "unjustifiable" to link agreement on this subject with the solution of other questions at SALT.

The text of the new Soviet proposal shows that Moscow's views do, in fact, closely parallel US provisions tabled on 4 December at Helsinki. At that time, however, the US made it very clear that it was proposing inclusion of such provisions on accidental or unauthorized incidents in a wider limitations agreement encompassing offensive and defensive weapons.

The rationale served up with this new overture echoes that voiced by Semenov in arguing Moscow's brief for an early ABM-only agreement. Both proposals appear aimed in part at deflecting attention away from topics the Soviets would plainly rather not discuss at present--in particular, offensive strategic systems. Moreover, the Soviets presumably see some merit in pushing for limited, separate agreements, both in an effort to accustom the US to accept a piece-by-piece approach to the issues at hand, and as a possible way of achieving some show of progress at SALT.

In a post-plenary conversation with Semenov, Ambassador Smith broached the third US alternative on ABM limitations, which would limit the US to defense of four Minuteman complexes, and the USSR to its present system around Moscow. Semenov's initial reaction was that the US proposal was aimed at obtaining unilateral advantage, and he said he could state "even now" that it was not acceptable to the USSR. He promised a more detailed response later.

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PAKISTAN

The disputants appear to have made some progress behind the scenes toward a political agreement, despite their sharply conflicting public statements. Bhutto says he is examining an "agreement" reached by Mujib and President Yahya. Presumably this is the one noted in The President's Daily Brief yesterday calling for an end to martial law, the start of civilian governments in the provinces, and the formation of an interim central cabinet.

Bhutto may be overemphasizing the progress made thus far in an attempt to enhance his own role and to forestall other West Pakistani leaders now in Dacca from eroding his position. Mujib, for his part, denies the existence of any agreement. However far the discussions have gone, Mujib may believe that unsettled matters such as the division of powers between the provinces and the central government are more important than any of the agreed points. At least until this is settled, he would be loath to admit to agreeing to anything short of full provincial autonomy.

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NOTES

Argentina: The country remains generally calm and apathetic following the assumption of power by a three-man junta. As the cabinet-forming process begins, the junta has retained Minister of Economy Ferrer and at least one other holdover, according to press reports, indicating a desire at the moment to avoid abrupt changes. An early announcement is likely that steps will be taken to hold elections, but the timetable will probably be so long that little popular support will be attracted to the new government.

Communist China - USSR: Chou En-lai called in Soviet Ambassador Tolstikov and chief border negotiator Ilichev for four hours of talks on 21 March--a move that may have been designed to soften the hostile impression created by Peking's polemic against Moscow issued on 17 March. TASS reports merely that "questions of interest to both sides" were discussed. A number of issues--such as the border question or Indochina--may have been reviewed, but Chou's primary aim may have been to attempt to separate problems arising out of continuing ideological differences between the two parties from those involving improvement of state-to-state relations.

Singapore-USSR:

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